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ABSTRACT

The instructional concept guide is part of a system developed for tutor training and support. It is primarily designed for volunteers, but it can also be adapted to the training of paraprofessional tutors for any type of adult literacy program. A key component in the system is the Tutor Support Library, consisting of Instructional Concept Guides (training and reference aids for tutors) and Functional Content Units (models for the practical application of tutoring skills). Guide One is an orientation to tutoring. In material addressed to the tutor it discusses the need to combat adult illiteracy, tutor qualifications, the process of learning to read, understanding the student and his needs, dialect patterns, getting to know the student, and suggestions for materials to use in further preparation for tutoring. Guides Two and Three which deal with the first sessions with a student are designed to be used in sequence following Guide One. (Author/MS)

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RALSU

TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY

Instructional Concept Guide No. 1

GETTING TOGETHER

Establishing a Working Tutorial Relationship

by

Robert A. Palmatier
Joyce D. Johnston
Susan G. Strader

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Regional Adult Literacy Service Unit

A Right to Read Community Based Project

309 Aderhold Building
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia
30602

CE 006 140

FOREWORD

The ability to read has been taken for granted in the United States for as long as most of us can remember. Unfortunately the "us" in the previous statement refers to those in the population who are indeed able to read --- for example, those of you reading this message. Adult readers make up an exclusive fraternity and seldom find themselves involved with non-readers. But in this century the tempo and technology of American life have increased dramatically. And more and more we see that a significant proportion of our citizens do not have the reading ability society requires.

In the 1970's, the Community Based Division of the Right to Read Effort addressed itself to overcoming what is rapidly becoming a crisis in the area of adult literacy. A common bond for many of the projects supported by this division of Right to Read is the use of volunteer tutors to teach the older, out-of-school individual who needs reading help. It has been generally found that, while the desire to tutor may be "born," the ability to tutor needs to be "made." Consequently the cry has gone out, "We have the volunteers but we do not have a system for training them to tutor."

RALSU, the Regional Adult Literacy Service Unit, a Right to Read Community Based project, has therefore accepted as its major responsibility the development of a tutor training and support

system. It is primarily designed for volunteers, but it can also be adapted to the training of para-professional tutors for any type of adult literacy program. The complete system includes tutor training, a support system for the working tutor, and evaluation strategies for both programs and tutors.

A key component in the system is the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY. This consists of two series of units entitled Instructional Concept Guides and Functional Content Units. The Concept Guides orient and train beginning tutors and serve thereafter as reference aids for the on-the-job tutor. The Functional Content Units are designed as models for the practical application of the teaching skills gained in the tutor training. For convenience, all Guides and Units are separately bound.

The Instructional Concept Guide that follows this "Foreword" is one of the following:

1. Getting Together: Establishing a Working Tutorial Relationship
2. Teaching One-to-One: A Diagnostic Approach to Beginning Tutoring
3. Student-Centered Tutoring: Using Initial Lesson Results to Set Future Goals
4. Help: Inside and Outside the Tutoring Agency
5. Process and Product: A Guide for Assessment of Community Tutoring Programs
6. Word Concepts: An Adult Approach to Decoding Skills
7. The Teaching of Sight Words: Ways and Means
8. The Language Experience Approach: Application for Tutoring Adults in Reading

9. The Directed Reading Approach: A Lesson Organization Procedure Adapted for Use with Adults

10. The Newspaper: A Source of High-Interest Instructional Material for Adults

11. Resources: A Guide for Using Published Materials in Adult Literacy Programs

12. Splitting Up: Terminating a Tutoring Relationship

Guide 1 is an orientation to tutoring; Guides 2 and 3 lead the tutor through the first sessions with a student. Except for Guides 1, 2, and 3, however, the booklets need not necessarily be presented in consecutive order. Guides 6 through 10, for example, explain in detail teaching procedures that can be used to teach the lessons described in Guides 2 and 3. Other Guides, as their titles imply, deal with supplemental helps for the tutor and with program assessment.

Hopefully, these materials as a whole will satisfy a long felt need expressed by many persons involved in the management of adult literacy programs. It is also hoped that the flexibility of format will make the publications adaptable to individualizing requirements within programs.

GETTING TOGETHER

Establishing a Working Tutorial Relationship

Welcome Aboard

As a tutor, one enters a noble service --- helping another person to learn. These pages offer suggestions for fighting adult illiteracy. The national target in the battle is the 19 million Americans who cannot read well enough to comfortably handle their everyday affairs. Through sharing your own reading ability by tutoring a less able reader, YOU can help.

Consider for a moment how difficult it is for a non-reader to get along in our print-dependent society. We are surrounded by signs, directions, application forms. To rent an apartment, to get credit, to get a social security card, to get a driver's license --- you must fill out a form. Even such a basic activity as food buying, with the serve-yourself supermarket system we use, involves a need to read signs and labels. One man, for instance, opened all the cartons on a drug store aisle looking for a bottle of Geritol; he could not read the labels. An ailing old woman walked twelve city blocks home because she could not read the bus schedule. Employment service personnel say that job applicants who have trouble reading often claim they have forgotten their

glasses as an excuse for needing help with application forms. These things happen every day in every community. As a tutor you can help at least one person to overcome his problem.

Concerned individuals, by serving as tutors, can provide help to those who have reached adulthood without learning to read adequately. These booklets on tutoring have been prepared as "how-to-do-it" guides for those who wish to help. There is no attempt to outline all the lessons needed to teach an adult to read. Instead, the emphasis is on teaching you, the tutor, how to plan and prepare reading lessons that can be used in tutoring sessions with adults. After all, no single, specific set of lessons would do anyway. Each tutoring program must be tailor-made for the personal background and skills of the adult involved. Consequently a tutor needs to know how to "tailor" the learning process. He needs to be trained to find out what his student needs to learn and how to plan lessons that will meet those needs and his student's interests. This booklet, together with the other guides in the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY, will help to train you, the tutor, for the job.

Who Can Tutor?

Prospective tutors often ask, "Am I qualified to teach someone to read?" To answer this question, decide first if you are truly willing to share what you know with somebody else. If you can answer with an honest "yes," we can go on. The next qualification is to be able to read better than the student you hope to

tutor. This does not mean you need to be either an expert reader or a trained teacher. Tutoring is different than the usual teacher/student situation. One-to-one tutoring is closer and personal. Instruction becomes more a matter of sharing rather than the traditional "give-and-take" relationship between teacher and students.

The sharing relationship in tutoring is an important responsibility. The adult with whom you will work is sharing a personal secret with you, namely, his inability to read. He is, therefore, depending upon you to commit yourself to work with him regularly --- not forever, but at least long enough so that he feels and can see that he has improved his reading. If you miss lessons without a fairly important reason, he is likely to think you are not very interested in him or his problem. He may decide his case is hopeless and quit coming. But when you genuinely trust each other, the tutoring is usually successful. So, if you are willing to accept the responsibility of the sharing commitment, you can be an effective tutor.

Besides posessing reading ability and a willingness to share, a tutor must be willing to learn also. As a tutor, you need to learn basic information about the reading process, that is, "how" a person reads.

You need to learn about planning and presenting the tutoring lessons. This means, first, participating in tutor training sessions. It includes examining instructional materials and studying units from the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY.

Second, it means you must be willing to ask for help from staff members of the tutoring program. No one expects tutors to be immediately all-knowing about teaching adults to read. No training sessions can provide that. But the mark of a good tutor is seeing his own limitations and being willing to seek help. The poor tutor, on the other hand, finds excuses to be absent when he feels insecure (and eventually drops out of the program). Insecurity is natural and expected. It will diminish with experience, and sometimes a helping hand from a supervisor, as the tutor/student relationship develops. The student too may be afraid and uncertain. After all, school-type learning situations have probably not been very rewarding in the past --- and certainly not very successful for him. Sometimes his fears make him appear to be reluctant to talk or to make him act (or be) bored. Naturally that does not make the tutor's job any easier. But patience and time usually win out, and, after a few sessions together, both you and the student begin to feel comfortable enough with each other to get down to honest, productive working-together.

There is a fourth qualification for tutoring that you may not have considered. Is there a feeling within you that says you need to give something of yourself to another human being? And in return, is there something you need to <u>get</u> from that other person? Experienced tutors freely admit that they entered the program in search of self-satisfaction (as well as out of curiosity). These are normal, honest feelings, and they can be satisfied through tutoring. Most tutors do find this work a self-satisfying outlet. Many discover

creativity and talents they did not know they, or illiterate adults, had. Nearly all find new friendships. As long as you are willing to give through tutoring, even though it may be to satisfy your own needs, no one will question your motives. Chances are excellent that you will join the ranks of those tutors who say they receive more than they give.

What is Learning to Read All About?

Fortunate children learn to read in grades one through three. Then, in grades four through six, they sharpen their reading skills and learn to apply them to finding out more about the world. They read history, geography, science and mathematics. They move step-by-step through a program which follows the slogan, "Learn to read; read to learn." The process of improving reading skill and applying it to new situations continues throughout life as a person's needs and interests change and grow. Anyone who did not learn to read in the normal school program finds himself more and more left out, as each year he is expected to handle more and more situations that demand reading. This is true for the fifth-grader who has trouble reading his social studies textbook. It is equally true for the adult whose job as a cook demands he read new recipes or as a mechanic, a new motor repair manual.

Poor or non-readers are often the result of teaching that was not suited to their needs and/or to language backgrounds that were not in harmony with the school program. Most people who learn to read along the expected route came to school with a fair understanding

of language. They usually also came with a sort of deep-rooted purpose for what we might call "increasing their control" of language. Adult illiterates, on the other hand, often have little understanding of basic concepts of language, its use, and how it can work for us. They may not understand such fundamentals as what a word is or what makes a sentence. Likewise, if they are not given to thinking logically or practiced in logical oral discussion, they will not be able to handle such situations in print either. For these people, tutoring needs to begin by developing the idea that reading and writing are related to listening and speaking. This is usually referred to as "language concept development."

For young children, the basic concepts about relationships between oral and written language are generally included when they are taught phonics as a method of decoding words. Adults, because of their wider life experience, can usually be approached more directly. That is, concepts which, for children, must be carefully demonstrated in small steps through a long-term instructional program, can be explained simply and directly to adults through the words in specific materials they need to read. This is called a "meaning-oriented approach." Adults always have materials they wish and need to read. They are therefore both motivated and have the necessary experience background to tackle word learning head-on PROVIDED it relates directly to the words they wish to read. In short, while your destination may be the same for kids and grownups, you can try the less-winding road with the adult because he has a fuller understanding of the message in "real world" reading material.

Sometimes the adult gets there faster also. Sometimes, however, whatever slowed his progress on the first attempt at learning continues to cause roughness. Help him as best you can.

In this booklet and in the entire TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY, the learning procedures to be taught are based on the adult framework as opposed to the way primary school children would be taught. The adult process of learning to read exposes the student to experiences through which he develops reading skills that help him get meaning from material that is of interest to him --- whether it is a recipe, an auto manual, the Bible, or the newspaper. He begins by learning words he wants to know. These words are then used as a base to develop skills for decoding new words. Such skill development is based on those parts of already known words that are common to other words.(We will call these common segments "common word elements.") The INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPT GUIDES in the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY give a fuller explanation of the process. They will also help you apply the process to the one-to-one tutorial technique.

Meet Your Student!

Most likely the student you tutor will be a mixture of a culture and lifestyle that is somewhat or totally unfamiliar to you. In fact, if his background matched yours, he probably would be able to read. The information that follows will help you better understand those people in the 16 to 60 age range who most frequently seek tutorial help. No such discussion can provide anything more than an overview,

of course, since each individual student is unique. However, experience has shown that tutors often ask questions about certain student characteristics. Answers to these questions can help you to know your student better and thus make you a more effective tutor.

Why Didn't He Learn in School?

As a whole, in the United States adults who cannot read come in about the same variety as younger, school-age learners. The big difference between them is that most of those children do indeed learn to read in school. The fact that a particular adult or group of adults did not learn to read in school is what makes literacy programs necessary. Why the adult did not learn to read, what makes him want to try again, and how we can set up a learning situation that will help him be more successful this time are the questions to be considered.

Pinpointing exactly why a person did not learn to read is hard to do. A variety of reasons were undoubtedly involved. The simplest answer may be a school that did not give quality instruction or which, for some reason, the student could not attend regularly. Or it may be that, because of the student's cultural background, the instruction he got had little meaning for him, and consequently he could not see any point to the whole affair. Maybe he had to go to work to help support the family, making education a luxury he could not afford. Sometimes people, for unknown reasons, simply reject education in their childhood years.

The factor of intelligence must also be included. All non-reading adults are by no means of low intelligence. But it should be remembered that these people originally had trouble with reading because their rate of learning was slower than that of the average student in the average public school. Because they were "left behind" does not mean they could not make progress, given time and patient instruction. In scattered cases, neurological problems may also be involved.

Obviously the list of "reasons" could go on and on. At this point, whatever the past so-called reasons might involve is outweighed by the fact that this person has decided to try once more to improve his reading ability.

What Does He Know and How Does He Feel?

The individual who comes to a literacy program, whether he is 16 or 60, is an adult and he expects to be treated as an adult. Because he has not been successful in education, he has little self-confidence. He may even be physically afraid of anything that resembles school. Since he is a grown-up, however, he will usually control these feelings, or at least not show them in childish ways. The need to cover his feelings may make him anxious and even cause behavior not acceptable in middle class society.

Such an individual invariably realizes he is having problems coping with everyday life --- handling his children (especially when they reach school age), getting and keeping a job, or in personal accomplishments and the enjoyment of life. Somehow he has

come to feel that there is something in knowing how to read that has meaning to his life, even though his goals and general value system are, and undoubtedly will remain, different from yours. And as one adult to another adult, he frankly wonders what the tutoring business has in it for you. Do not be afraid to let him know that you too hope to gain something. Your sincerity in establishing this adult-to-adult relationship can be a key factor in changing your student's attitude about his ability to learn to read. Being honest about yourself will help him gain confidence also.

Because an adult has spent a longer time living in the world, he is more "set in his ways" than a child. But an adult's potential for learning is much the same as when he was young, although it may take him longer to learn and he may need more physical comforts (such as a quiet atmosphere) while he does it. The adult's more rigid ways may make him less adaptable, but his maturity, on the other hand, gives him a more realistic attitude about life and a more practical view of his own goals.

To be satisfactory, a reading program must take into account the learning rate of the adult for whom it is planned. The rate he displays now may be quite different than the rate he operated with in the past. The adult student's learning rate will always be closely related to his present goals. These, in turn, will be related to his personal interests and the interests of his age group. If he wishes to be able to interpret his child's report card, to read the Twenty-third Psalm, or to fix his motorcycle, and if his reading instruction is based upon that specific goal, he will

undoubtedly learn quite rapidly. On the other hand, remember that he is a volunteer student and usually has more pressing problems than reading. In his life, long-term goals have not been very meaningful --- the "future" tends to be "never" in his eyes. Thus if he cannot connect his reading instruction with a concrete, attainable short-term goal, he may decide to skip the whole deal.

Some adults, especially the young, will not or cannot communicate their most important goals to you. Many undereducated persons find it hard to describe how they feel, especially when they are on your "home ground" instead of their own. Always remember that your student had a reason for coming in the first place, namely, to learn to read. He needs and is asking for help. His ability to communicate with you will increase as his trust in you increases. In the meantime he will be particularly sensitive to non-verbal types of communication, tending to judge both you and the tutoring program by your actions instead of your words. In such cases, extra effort on your part may be needed to find your student's interests and to prepare teaching materials that will keep him coming.

Another situation you may face is the complicated defense mechanism an adult nonreader may have developed to hide the fact he cannot read. He may always carry a newspaper with him or have a notebook and pencil visible in his pocket. He may be an extraordinarily skillful talker, as opposed to the noncommunicative types mentioned above. The intelligence of the poor reader is often very evident in the inventive devices he uses to hide his disability. Yet this type of student is asking for help in learning to read just

as much as the others. You should try to convert whatever skills a student has developed for camouflaging his problem into aids that will help him achieve true literacy. Indeed, if you do not try to utilize those skills, the student may feel rejected.

And What About Dialect?

While everyone speaks in the dialect pattern typical of his social group, the language of education is primarily that of the middle class. If a person grew up in a social situation characterized by extreme poverty and was never really exposed to the middle class standard, he may not understand that social groups use a variety of dialects. The general concept of dialect involves changing the way you speak to suit (a) your purpose for speaking and (b) what kind of speech you think your listener will understand. Most adults vary their dialect to suit their needs, e. g., job interviews, telephone ordering, disciplining children, or rapping with friends. How we talk depends upon our need to impress the listener. Illiterate persons may not be aware of this phenomenon. They often do not differentiate between rapping with a close and understanding friend and reading orally to an instructor, for example. Therefore they use only one dialect. And since "book English" and English as it is regularly spoken are not exactly the same, problems may arise. The point for you to consider is,"Does the student's oral reading match the meaning of the written words?" If it does, he understands the words adequately; he only pronounces or orders them differently.

Another concept that may need to be presented to the student

is that, while the pronunciation of a word may vary from person to person, there are some language patterns that are considered, for better or for worse, as "standards" by most people. This idea must not, however, be presented in such a way that the student gets the idea that you think his basic speech habits are not acceptable. Not accepting his everyday speech would definitely mean you do not accept him as a person. The best way to help your student develop a feeling for standard language patterns is to provide him a model through your own pronunciation and sentence structure. Do not "correct" your student, however. If you are so unaccustomed to the speech habits of his community, try to react as if your lack of understanding is caused by your not hearing what he said. (Your "hearing" will improve as you become more accustomed to his dialect.) Ask him to repeat his statement. In response to, "I'm sorry, I didn't hear that," most people will speak louder and enunciate more clearly. In that way the dual goals of communication and dialect modification can be achieved without rejecting either the speaker or his speech.

How Will I Get to Know My Student?

Always keep in mind that the student came to the literacy program to learn to read. Your friendship is a nice fringe benefit for him, but do not pressure him with it. Probing for information about his background is not a good idea. When you have built up trust in each other, he will share with you those things he wants you to know. Besides, if you appear too interested in his background and life style, he may begin giving you the kind of answers he thinks

you expect, even though they may be fantasy.

Regarding a student's personal problems, only make suggestions when you are directly asked. In general, try to steer clear of such situations. A tutor should never attempt to be a therapist. Lack of expertise in this role may result in serious damage to a student.

Determining the student's learning needs and interests is what concerns you. Only when the tutor/student relationship is solidly based on learning needs will the student's goals be met in the tutoring sessions.

Your acceptance of your student and your willingness to share your knowledge with him is the route to establishing an effective relationship. As you demonstrate your efforts to improve his reading skills, the student will become more trusting and open. To be worthy of his trust, you must be a reliable and accepting tutor. Consistent attendance at tutoring sessions and a "helping" attitude are the major methods for proving your commitment. Clear evidence of your commitment will help the student develop and demonstrate his own commitment. When such a relationship is established, the association becomes safe and exciting for both parties. The personal goals in the literacy program of each member of the pair will then be possible.

And From Here?

Other selections from the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY are available to help you understand the basic one-to-one tutoring method, how

to plan and present lessons, how to determine what skills a student needs to learn, and how to record a student's progress. As you work through the next booklet, you will actually prepare your first lessons. You will be given guidelines on how to evaluate both your lesson and what your student learns from it.

After completing these beginning steps, you will be ready to use the other parts of the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY on your own to help you continue your tutoring. The INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPT GUIDES in the LIBRARY give you more complete directions for ways to teach an adult to develop his reading skills.

A second set of tutor helps in the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY are entitled Functional Content Units. This series includes actual model lessons that teach reading skills through materials that, at the same time, help the student learn valuable information about coping with everyday life. The Functional Content Units show you how to expand and fit subject matter to a student's particular level of achievement and to his interests. By using these units as models, a tutor or agency can develop additional units that teach reading through subject matter meaningful to the students.

Your initial training, the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY, and help from supervisors on the tutoring program staff should give you adequate support for successful tutoring. Now, as you continue, keep in mind the valuable service you will be performing. You will actually be doing something to help overcome the disturbing percentage of our nation's population who reach maturity without the ability to read as well as they need to. You will be helping

to break the illiteracy-ignorance-poverty cycle. All of our 210 million citizens appreciate your effort, but each of our 19 million functional illiterates reached is appreciative beyond measure.

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Other materials you may wish to read on tutoring adults and on adult literacy in general are listed below:

1. Colvin, Ruth J. and Root, Jane H. Tutor: Techniques Used in the Teaching of Reading. Syracuse, N. Y.: Literacy Volunteers, Inc., 1972.

2. Pope, Lillie. Guidelines to Teaching Remedial Reading, Rev. Ed. New York: Book-Lab, Inc., 1975.

3. Rauch, Sidney J., ed. Handbook for the Volunteer Tutor. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1969.

4. Smith, Carl B. and Fay, Leo C. Getting People to Read: Volunteer Programs That Work. New York: Dell, 1973.

5. Stauffer, John M. The NALA Study. Syracuse, N. Y.: New Readers Press - Laubach Literacy Occasional Paper, 1973.